

most schools in my district, which is in San Antonio.

What do we get out of reduced class size? We have safe and orderly places for learning, to begin with. We have improved performance of students and teachers. Every study reflects the smaller the class, the better an educational experience for the child. There is no doubt about that.

Now, I am not here to say that only Democrats have these concerns, and I am not here to say that only Democrats have all the answers. That is not true. We have most of the answers. And a good example of a bipartisan bill was the Rangel-Johnson Better Classroom Act. And I am now just going to briefly go over it.

This bipartisan bill would subsidize \$24.8 billion in zero interest school modernization bonds. The Federal Government would provide tax credits for the interest normally paid on these bonds. Bonds that would have gone to pay bond interest would be freed for other educational needs. For each \$1,000 of school bonds, States or local school districts would save as much as \$500 in payments. Yes, out of \$1,000, they could save \$500 in interest service payments.

So what was the Federal Government's role in this? What would be the burden on the Federal Government? What would happen to local control? States and eligible school districts would complete a review of construction and renovation needs. I repeat, the school districts and the States would conduct the studies. State plans would include processes for allocating funds to areas with the greatest needs. The Federal Government would provide a tax credit to the bond purchaser equal to the interest that would otherwise be paid on a school construction bond. No new Federal bureaucracy would be created.

So my colleagues might say, that sounds like a great idea; what happened to it? It died in a Republican-controlled committee. They are in the majority, and they can do it if they want to; and they did it in this bipartisan bill. Not bipartisan enough as far as the number of Republicans that would come and join us in this wonderful plan and proposal. But this is the problem today.

I started off my remarks by saying that a picture is worth a thousand words. I also will end it by saying that talk is cheap. Words are cheap. What we want to see is action. What we want to see are tangible results. So we may have individuals out there that are touting themselves as the education governor of Texas, but if Texas is such a great model, then I would ask all of my fellow Members in this House, 434, those that are not from Texas, I would ask them to adopt Texas as the model; strive for Texas's great place in education, if that is the great progress that has been made in the past 5 years under Governor Bush.

Talk is cheap. I ask Governor Bush and I ask Members on the other side of

the aisle to join hands. Let us not give up on an educational system that provides an education to 90 percent of the children in this country, the public school system. It needs improvement. There is no doubt about that, and we all agree. And we can do it if we work together. But we cannot replace it by simply saying we have a voucher program or let us just privatize it. That will not work.

Let us not lose faith in our public schools. If we lose faith in our public schools, we lose faith in the students. We lose faith in our children. We lose faith in our future.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman for those great comments. I think he has brought this to light in terms of one of the issues. And I want to share with the gentleman the fact that when we did a hearing on violence, one of the key things that they found was classroom size and the importance of making sure we had construction money to rebuild our schools in this country.

I think it is going to be important to make sure we upgrade our technology. We want to make sure that the digital divide does not occur and that cyber-segregation does not happen. I think it is important that every school have that opportunity to be able to provide for their youngsters what is needed.

The gentleman mentioned libraries. I know libraries are having difficulty buying books and also buying the new technology.

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Those resources are key. And I want to take this opportunity to thank my colleague for joining me tonight as we have talked about this particular issue which is very key, and that is meeting the needs of education in this country.

As we move forward, we know that the solution is a variety of answers. Both classroom sizes, making sure we have new construction for our schools, making sure we meet those demographic needs that are out there, making sure that we have after-school programs, making sure that we reach out to those 3- and 4-year-old youngsters with Head Start and a variety of different types of programs, and also making sure we have qualified teachers that are out there providing that instruction that is needed.

That requires a commitment, and we are here to let our colleagues know that we are going to make that commitment to make sure that we meet the challenge of the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our colleagues for allowing us to have this opportunity to be here tonight and dialoguing on the important issue of education, which, as my colleague recognizes, is very important and very key to all of us and one of the things that we need to all be responsive.

GRANTING PERMANENT NORMAL TRADE RELATIONS TO CHINA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GARY MILLER of California). Under a

previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight in support of granting permanent normal trade relations to China, a vote that this House will face possibly as soon as next month.

I consider this to be the most important vote that I will take as a Member of Congress and am strongly in support of it, not just for the economic advantages that it will bring to the U.S., but for the far more important reason of national security and global security, a peaceful world. I think both of these issues are critically at stake in this vote that we will take.

What permanent normal trade relations for China means is that the U.S. has negotiated a trade agreement with China. In exchange for giving them permanent normal trade relations, we will get from them dramatic reductions in tariffs across the board on goods and services.

This is tied into China's entry in the WTO. But it is important to point out that, regardless of what this body does in permanent normal trade relations, China will probably enter the WTO. The rest of the world has as much to say about that as we do.

What we can decide in this House is whether or not we gain the benefits from the permanent normal trade relations treaty that was negotiated with China. In other words, will we begin the economic advantages of reduced tariffs on goods and service across the board to China.

There was a lot of concern about the trade deficit with China. What better way to reduce that than to have a trade agreement that lowers China's barriers to our goods but does nothing to change the barriers to their goods coming to our country. It helps level the playing field and would be a tremendous economic advantage for this country. In agriculture, in my own region, in aerospace and software, name it, we would have an advantage of gaining access to the Chinese market and, therefore, help improve our economy.

As I pointed out, this does not necessarily mean China will come into the WTO. The rest of the world will decide that issue. But the economics are only a tiny part of it.

What is far more important to me is the national security implications, the long-term implications that that has for this country and the rest of the world. We need to peacefully coexist with China. I, for one, do not want another Cold War.

I do not want a hostile relationship with China. We must engage with them to prevent that. I believe that we can. We have followed a policy of engagement and we must continue on that if we are to have a peaceful world. Another Cold War could lead to trade wars and can ultimately lead to military wars and World War III. I do not want that.

China is a country of 1.2 billion people. It is an emerging power. Whether we are engaged with them or not, they will be an emerging power. I want them to be one that we can peacefully coexist with, and trading with them is a critical first start to that effort.

Now, opponents of China typically start out their arguments by pointing out all of the bad things about China, and I will not disagree with any of those. On human rights, on labor rights, on protecting the environment, on their relationship with Taiwan, on basic Democratic freedoms, China has a long way to go. They have a horrible record across the board. And I will rise with all of my colleagues and say that as often as possible and urge China to improve.

But it is not as simple as saying, if China has done anything bad, therefore, we should not trade with them. The question is, how are we going to pull them forward? What course of action is going to improve human rights, is going to improve labor rights, is going to improve how China treats Taiwan? Isolation?

We tried isolation with Cuba for 40 years. Cuba is a tiny nation not 90 miles off of our coast, and our efforts at isolating them has not done one little bit to improve any of their record on democracy, human rights, or anything.

Do we really believe that we can isolate China and pull them forward, a nation of 1.2 billion people with its own power source? If we cut off China, we will be leaning towards a bipolar world that will do nothing to improve human rights.

That is why many human right organizations have said that engagement with China and entry of China into the WTO is critical to us having a better relationship with them and critical to improving human rights in China. We must show them what a capitalist democracy can do. If we do, their people will demand the basic freedoms that the rest of us enjoy. To the cut them off and to isolate them is to empower the hardliners in China who want to maintain the brutal dictatorship forever. We must engage with them and pull them forward.

Many also argue that because of China's attitude towards Taiwan we should not give them access to the WTO. Taiwan wants China in the WTO. They are the ones most affected by that. And they want it for a very logical reason. In essence, they would be trapped in a room with a bully with nobody around. They want as much company as possible. They want the bright light shined on China and their activities for their own protection.

We have many concerns in this area, but giving China PNTR status is going to do more to pull forward those concerns than anything else.

I strongly urge our body to support PNTR for China, not just because of the economic advantages, but because it is important to the future of the world.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE'S ENERGY POLICY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from California (Mr. DOOLITTLE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Mr. Speaker, tonight marks the third installment in a series of special orders begun last summer that Members of the House have held on the record and views of Vice President AL GORE.

The Vice President is fond of attacking the work of the majority in the House. We conservatives believe it is important that Americans understand why AL GORE finds our record of cutting taxes, balancing the budget, eliminating wasteful spending, and restoring common sense environmental policies so contemptible.

We believe it is important that the American people know what their Vice President actually stands for. Today, we will examine Vice President GORE's energy policy.

American motorists and hard-working truck drivers in rural and urban areas, particularly those with lower incomes, are getting squeezed by soaring gas prices.

Unfortunately, the Vice President is not there to help. In fact, he is cheering the prices on. It would distress the American people to learn that the Vice President is pleased with this turn of events. After all, he has long advocated policies expressly intended to raise the price and decrease the availability of gasoline to the American people.

He thinks that we just plain use too much of it, the only way to get us to cut back is to raise the prices. Whether it happens through conservation or supply cutbacks, price controls, or tax increases, the end result is what matters. And not only gasoline but all sources of energy he thinks other people should not use are targeted. The Vice President has long advocated his disturbing energy policy, summed up as the less energy used the better.

Tonight we will highlight excerpts from his apocalyptic book *Earth in the Balance* and other statements the Vice President has made in the past.

Parenthetically, I note this book is being reissued. I am delighted to hear that. I recommend its reading by every informed American so that they will clearly understand what they are getting when they have AL GORE as the Vice President.

Since taking office in 1993 with President Clinton, Vice President GORE was essentially seated in environmental policy for the administration. The administration wasted little time in pursuing an agenda of strict controls on energy. Indeed, it was not more than a couple of months after taking office that a Btu tax was first proposed in 1993 that would force people to feed big government in direct proportion to the amount of energy they consume.

While even the Democrat-dominated Congress rejected that approach, a 4.3

cents per gallon surtax was successfully levied on gasoline. In fact, the Vice President cast the deciding tie-breaking vote in the upper body that allowed this commuter-punishing tax to be enacted. And it remains with us until this day.

Vice President GORE advocated this tax hike not so much to increase revenues for the Federal Government but really to help increase the price of gas and help keep Americans out of their cars. But the price of gasoline has increased so much recently as to dwarf those 4.3 cents per gallon.

It represents the best of all worlds for Vice President GORE. He has the higher gas prices, which he favors on policy grounds, but he did not have to pass such a massive tax increase in order to accomplish it.

To those complaining of high gas prices, Mr. GORE would say, too bad. It is for your own good. Buck up, take your own medicine. If you do not like it, then invent a more efficient engine, ride a bicycle, or take the bus.

Tonight we will talk about the foreign policy failure of this administration, which, by its own admission, was "asleep at the wheel" on this vital international issue. We will discuss how the administration deliberately increased our dependence on OPEC and other foreign sources of oil in the first place.

The United States actually has the potential to become much less dependent on foreign powers for oil, but to do so would conflict with the Vice President's utopian new-age vision beautifully laid out in this book *Earth in the Balance*.

Not only oil but other prominent energy sources have been attacked by the Clinton-Gore administration. The Vice President has urged Americans to find alternative energy sources as an answer to our current woes. Well, those have been tried before and they have failed despite heavy Federal subsidies.

As my colleagues can see here in this chart, this thin red line represents the alternative energy sources, which is just about one percent or so of the total energy consumption in the United States.

The Kyoto Emissions Treaty negotiated by the Vice President would have a devastating impact on American's lives. The upper body wisely refused to ratify it, but the Clinton-Gore administration is trying to implement it stealthily nonetheless. It would make the present situation with gasoline prices pale in comparison.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS).

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

The gentleman performs an excellent service to his colleagues in holding this special order this evening to continue his quest for awareness by the American public of the lack of policy for long-term self-sufficiency for the United States and, worse than that, the implementation of a short-sighted policy that can hurt the American citizen in the short term and the long term.